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# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS' HOPE

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## I

Jesus' hope for the world seems to separate him from the tasks of civilization. All his teachings have reference to the Kingdom of God, which, as he conceived it, is not to be obtained by historic progress, but is to descend suddenly from heaven in divine power. The short interval, which he expected between his announcement that the Kingdom is at hand and its catastrophic inauguration, was not to be for its evolution, but for preparation of heart for the Kingdom's appearing. His absorption in that celestially originated order excluded from his mind the problems of the developments of industry, government, culture, as these demands confront us. The influence of Jesus upon the progress of social institutions seems to many to be based upon one of the most fortunate misconceptions that ever blessed mankind. But now that his authentic thought and ideal have been recovered, we can no longer profit by the age-long mistake.

The limits of an article on this subject permit only a few unexpanded reflections and suggestions. Their lacks will be evident to everyone who appreciates that all the contents of Jesus' soul were fused into his expectation and molded by it; that the main current of spiritual history flowed through it; that the contrasts between his gospel and the conditions that men have to face and the work that men have to do, may separate life into discordant realms, with increasing confusions of faith and action. The arguments for modern scholarship's view of Jesus' eschatology I must, except for a few intimations, leave to each reader to find or to work out for himself. Those who may think that my emphasis upon the social motives of

Jesus' hope is at the expense of its religious and personal elements, will recognize that I am obliged to make a selection. Yet I acknowledge that my social emphasis is because of my conviction that the faith and hope of Jesus are social in ground and origin, social in essence, social in fulfilments.

A detailed knowledge of Jesus' expectation would require much clearer and fuller reports of his teaching than we possess. In such paucity of data we should be cautious of exaggerating contradictions and incongruities, and should concentrate upon elements of his prophecy that are pervasive. There are important differences from Jewish, Pauline, and other forms of the hope then prominent in Israel, of an impending revolution of the world by divine interference. From these are derived many statements incorrectly attributed to Jesus by the evangelists. But there remain in the synoptic records utterances derived from their most authentic sources and which are consistent with our best substantiated knowledge and clearest impression of him. In these reports we recognize his own message. Jesus shared the general hope. He purified it. He poured into it his own spiritual consciousness and social passion.

Jesus' expectation differs from the materialism, secularism, and exclusive nationalism of the Jewish and—with modifications—the Jewish-Christian eschatology. It also differs from the celestially inclined hope of Paul, from which the colors of Jesus' earth of the glorious future have faded, and from the still more transcendentalized expectation of the gospel and epistle called by the name of John. Jesus looked into the near future of the world for the realization of the Kingdom of God, and anticipated there a social order worthy of God to give and of men to receive.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Careful readers of the New Testament, though not technically trained, can construct the expository argument on its main lines for themselves. They should keep to the first three gospels, read "age" for "world" in most places where it makes sense, and understand "treasure—or reward—in heaven" not of where the treasure is to be enjoyed, but where it is being kept. Also, "the Kingdom of God" is evidently Jesus' usual phrase; and Luke 17:21 refers to the Kingdom's sudden irruption: the translation "among you" is near enough. These hints may help to correct other misapprehensions.

The change which Jesus expected is only subordinately a change in the material world. It is a regenerated, revolutionized order of human life upon the earth. Some synoptic passages indeed, judged to be essentially his because they are characteristic of him and closely represent their oldest sources, appear inconsistent with this anticipation. Such incongruities are unavoidable in a conception which no vision or thought can make a complete unity. There are glorious confusions from hopes so exultant that they can never, to our thought at least, be realized on this earth; as the absence of death, the tangible presence of those risen from the dead, including himself, and the ordering of the forms of human life upon celestial models—"like unto the angels." That these confusions did not confuse him is due to his prophetic consciousness, essentially different from the claim of a magical clairvoyance of future events. It is not a rationalizing, systematically constructive consciousness. He was not concerned to work out a utopian system. The new order is the Father's gift. It includes every good which the Father can bestow upon his children. How its blessings are to be interrelated is the Father's concern, not his. Of inexhaustible significance is his relation of the Kingdom to the divine Fatherhood.

He thought that nothing men can do hastens or retards this impending divine event. Its coming and the moment of its coming depend upon God only. Far from his faith was the Jewish assumption, that if Israel should keep the law for one day the Kingdom of God would come. Yet men are to await it, not with folded hands, but with girded loins and lamps trimmed and burning. "Repent" was his proclamation, "for the Kingdom of God is at hand." The word inadequately translated "repent" means an inward revolution. It is not merely a repudiation of the conduct condemned by the morality and religion of his time or of any imperfect time. It is not satisfied with standards of righteousness below those which his own life expressed. The very spirit of the Kingdom, the inward

holiness, self-renouncing devotion, and all-enduring, all-forgiving ministering love, to which the blessings of the new order correspond, must be implanted and must grow in the receptive heart. Not that this establishes the Kingdom in the heart thus directed to it. Nor has it become established in the present fellowship of men thus changed in mind. It is to be a regnant social order, not yet realized. Yet this new life in the soul makes its possessors sons of the Kingdom, no longer children of the present age. This part of Jesus' gospel opens to us his own inexhaustible treasures of character, spiritual life, and devoted ministry.

These are the two essential, inclusive elements of Jesus' message: the all-important divine event in the near future and preparation of heart for it. "Be changed inwardly: for the Kingdom of God is at hand." But between these two extends a vast field of human tasks. Only by the fulfilment of our responsibility to the tasks of civilization may mankind advance toward the perfected world-order of Jesus' hope. Admitting, as we are forced to admit, that Jesus was mistaken both in the nearness and the manner of the coming of God's Kingdom on earth, and that he made no conscious provision for our inalienable responsibility, must we undertake it with only incidental help from him, acknowledging that his gospel is not for the world as it is, to make it the world as it ought to be?

## II

The significance of Jesus' expectation, it is said with increasing currency, is his perception that the betterment of the world depends, not upon a process of natural evolution, but upon spiritual forces. In this sense, it is said, the Kingdom descends from heaven and is God's gift, whether it comes soon or late, suddenly or progressively. Without entering upon a critical analysis of this thought, we may accept its estimate of spiritual powers. That appreciation will, I believe, make evident that the essentials of Jesus' hope are indispensable for the task of civilization which we have to do, and inevitably

translatable into it. Also, our fulfilment of our task will be found to be historically conditioned upon his hope as he held it, to the practical sufficiency of which its mistakes and limitations are requisites.

One with the best spirit of our age, one with a militant and devoted humanism, is Jesus' prophecy of a perfected earth. "The distant triumph song" sounded for him, not from the heaven above us, but from the earth as it is to be, from happy, pure, and loving men, even as we hear it, whose hearts humanity has touched, while we toil for the world's perfecting. His deepest and tenderest consolation to his disciples about to be bereft of him, was not that they should "meet the Lord in the air," nor that he, coming again, would "receive them unto himself," in that heaven to which he was returning, but that he who had so often pledged with them the cup of joy and love would "drink it new with them in the Kingdom of God." It is not heaven that we are working for or can work for, but earth as he foresaw it. The toiler's Kingdom of God is to be here. Often our hope of the world's progress is turned to doubt, sometimes to despair. Then we limit ourselves to patching one rent or another of an old decaying garment. We fret to make some conditions a little less intolerable, some human interrelations a little less discordant, if we can, between man and man, nation and nation, race and race, those who are in possession and those who are frantic to possess. Then we sink to futile compromises. We wander along desert trails that lead nowhere. Both aim and inspiration depart from resultless tasks. We need the reassurance that abides in the spirit of humanity, and which rises in our hearts from the insight and confidence of him who was most human. In his vision we see that the aims most spiritual, the faith most heroic, move unfalteringly on to the hope that is set, not unrelatedly above us, but attainably before us. It is this hope which intensifies the great task of humanity upon earth, the realization of humanity in the conditions and relations of earth.

Jesus' gospel of the Kingdom offers not only inspiration to an attainable goal, but guidance no less. His Kingdom is for the poor; this is our directive principle. His dominant beatitudes are to the hungry, who shall be filled; for them that mourn, who shall be comforted. The earth is the inheritance of the meek, even the lowly and oppressed. These announcements are not figurative. Does one offer rescue in a figurative sense to drowning men, or figuratively promise bread to starving children? Nor is he pointing to heaven, as we have indolently and supinely misunderstood him. He is speaking of the establishment of his Father's Kingdom upon the earth. Those who groan under the intolerable yoke of tyranny, inequality, inhumanity, and are hungering and thirsting for God's righteousness on the earth, shall have their longing satisfied. The last are first in his exultant hope, as in his beneficent compassion: the last must be first in every human task. The initial object of every service is the least of these his brethren.

In this incontrovertible interpretation of his words, ministry, social passion, our discipleship to Jesus gains a meaning more revolutionary than any socialistic programs, which must be tested, without prejudice either way, by their practical working out of his aim. His gospel of the Kingdom imposes a task pervasive of all our life, of every man's calling, of all our organizations and institutions. Only as practically directed to the redemption of the poor, the neglected, the miserable, is any comfort, pleasure, character, spirituality, permissible, any advantage of birth, opportunity, ability. All things which are not directed and proved effective to this end are to his disciples unclean, hateful. They are blasphemies of his name, repudiations of his leadership, rejections of his salvation. They are Peter's denials of him, and Judas' betrayal. Ministry to the last and least is the primary and inclusive purpose of all government, all commerce, all industry, all social relations. By service directed to them impartial

benefit is secured for all. For this purpose the gifts of genius descend from the wisdom and compassion of the all-loving fatherhood, wealth is accumulated and distributed, inventions conquer the material to human uses and ends, and the church preaches the gospel to the poor.

The spiritual nobility of Jesus' hope exempts it from particularistic and materialistic aims. Moral and spiritual regenerations are inseparable from the blessings of his Kingdom. Into it may enter only the righteous, kind, loving, forgiving. Therefore our ministry to the last and least, which regulates all personal and social action, is, above all else, though not prior to all else, cultivation of their mind and heart and soul, of their character, spirituality, service. Of them is required devotion to his self-renouncing ideals, including the forgiveness which brings men back to one another from every hatred, hostility, and prejudice, however caused, and makes those who were enemies of one another fellow-workers for the Kingdom of God. When we merge with Jesus' compassion for the poor his demands upon them—for the least in that Kingdom is to be greater than the greatest of this age—when we recognize them as first in human and divine regard, that they may be blended with all citizens of the Kingdom in equal and supreme privilege and service, it can be said with clearer meaning, that there is no other practicable all-inclusive aim for humanity and every member of it. Then every other principle of advance yields to Jesus' compassionate concentration of all human forces upon the neglected, the oppressed, the last and least. The opposite principle, most monstrous inhumanism of the passing era dominated by physical science, that the inheritance of the earth is the contention of the strong and the spoil of the strongest, has gone down in the world-war to everlasting contempt. Between the two principles there is no standing-ground, and Jesus' principle can make no compromise. Whatever aim is not directed to that or comes short of that, thereby reverts to the opposite. It is time to shame



its antagonist out of thought as out of history. Let the ape and tiger die out of our philosophies. For men are of a higher order, which has attained another principle, save as the brutes have devotions to the helpless, in anticipations of the human. The futility of the anti-Christian principle is attested by the dark places of the earth, the habitations of cruelty, and by suffering bodies and barren souls about us, by the groaning ages, the horrible reverses of humanity, by irreparable wastes of ability stifled under poverty and oppression, by potencies of ministry suppressed, by thought and beauty and leadership wrenching in vain at their prison bars, or dead at hungry mothers' empty breasts.

### III

But what did he do about it? He did the only thing he could do, and it was the strongest thing that could ever be done. He founded the new humanity, which is the fellowship of his social passion. This was not the church. No utterance of his which meets the tests of authenticity as demonstrated in the general trend of modern scholarship, mentions the church. It receives no sanction or inheritance from him, except in so far as it belongs, with other practical stimulations and agencies, in the fellowship of his social passion. Many tests of membership which all branches and divisions of the church agree in imposing are nonessential to the fellowship which he formed and is ever forming. Even the confession of his name is not a requisite. Multitudes of those whom he has united in his spirit do not know the source of their regenerated social and personal life. This result is to his unspeakably greater honor, to the deeper recognition of his power. Multitudes in distant climes, who never heard of him, multitudes who lived before his coming, are members of the brotherhood which he established by completing it; for their spirit is so akin to his, and his regenerative power is so much greater than theirs, that their true devotions to humanity must find his deeper intensities, must be merged into his larger and clearer aims.

The sympathetic student of spiritual history must judge that the greatest names are destined to array themselves under the name that is above every name. This judgment becomes conviction in men of conscious discipleship to him. In the way most direct, simple, inevitable, he established the new humanity, into which everything truly human pours itself. He attached to himself a little company, in most of whom he kindled a spark from his own fire. That little company became an enlarging nucleus—not conterminous with the church, even in its early history—of the new humanity, or rather of humanity restored to its own inmost nature. This renewed mankind, which is not an abstraction or a mass, but a concrete unity of souls interrelated in him, endured, expanding, contracting, corrupted, repurified, baffled, resurgent, but ever on its way to subdue all human life unto itself.

Against the discredited interpretations of history which, in various formulations, reduce its power of advance to material forces, capable of only material results, stands history's own witness that its power grows through companies of men in whom a vision has dawned and a passion has been enkindled, and that material things and developments are their instruments. So, when we are tempted to despair of any predominant good resulting from the colossal sins, sacrifices, heroisms, of the world-war, and we sorrow over reactions of greed and insensibility, confusions breeding confusions, recrudescences of brute and devil, our courage grows strong again when we find, in high places and lowly places, men to whom life can never again be as far as it was from Jesus' hope and aim. We become aware of heart responding to fraternal heart, and determined will joining determined will, into the fellowship of those whom the woes and intrinsic spiritualities of humanity have absorbed. We know that the world's future is given into their hands. This fellowship springs from the heroic devotion of those who gave their lives that humanity might live. So the all-inclusive fellowship created by Jesus, in which this fellowship

from the world-war was formed and is completed, is vitalized forever from his heroic sacrifice. His glorious death of love, agony, and shame rises increasingly, in immortal life, into the brotherhood of the world as it is to be. This is what he did about it. He did the only thing he could do, and it was the strongest thing that could ever be done.

Jesus' expectation of the almost immediate gift of God's Kingdom can connote a lack of wisdom only to those who suppose that thought has any value when it is less than a transforming power. The dissevered intellectualism which then remains is on a level with the performances of arithmetical prodigies. The wise man is not one who separates himself from those limitations of his time which enshrine its noblest hopes and aims. The prophets of Israel were greater, not less, for conditioning the world's hope upon the fortunes of Israel. If it were true that certain medieval thinkers anticipated the German idealists, and died leaving no trace upon the mind of their age, those barren cliffs of desolate seas cannot compare in the world's gratitude with men who spoke to their own time some comprehensible word that stirred it on. It is wisdom to take into one's own soul the highest, strongest impulse which at the time broods on the hearts of men. This Jesus did when he fused the contemporary expectation of the Kingdom of God into all his thoughts and deeds. It is wisdom to ennoble and humanize the supreme impulse of one's own time, to enforce the moral and spiritual conditions of realizing its hope, and to create its devoted brotherhood. This Jesus did. If he had attempted or even imagined more, he would have accomplished little, for only through appropriation of the best in one's own generation can one work upon the ages following. And when the form bursts asunder, the spirit, which pours itself into the molds of each generation, remains to inspire and guide through all successive forms.

What personal expectation mingled with his universal hope? Did he anticipate a seat on the right hand of power, coming

on the clouds of heaven and all his holy angels with him? Such claims wake little response in hearts attuned to his self-renouncing ministry. We welcome every success of criticism in sifting out from the Gospels the additions to his authentic sayings concerning the Kingdom of God, because so little is left of the pretensions attributed to him. His theme was the Kingdom, not the Christ. All the more evidently is he central in his eternal religion because the supreme significance is forced upon him by the experience of his disciples. So the Fourth Gospel would be a tawdry thing if understood to be an authentic report of his own words and deeds. It is a glorious thing, notwithstanding its ecclesiasticisms and long antiquated attempts at philosophy, when it is recognized as the imaging of the significance which Jesus has attained in the mind and heart of humanity. Criticism has not been able indeed to deny his messianic consciousness, but has made evident that this consciousness was predominantly of the inspired and empowered herald of the Kingdom. So predominantly that every forward look into his own destiny was the confidence of the victory of his mission, expressed in whatever incidental and traditional forms. The popular understanding of the title "Son of Man," though it has no suspicion of the original meaning, does not misinterpret essentially his mission and his consciousness. He who announced the Kingdom, building better than he knew, as does every man in proportion as the spirit of humanity and the God of it sweeps through him, founded the Kingdom from the spiritual attainments of humanity and his own soul, by forming the brotherhood of service to the last and least. He desires no pompous throne from which to lord it over us and to exercise authority upon us. He came into the world's history never to be ministered unto, forever to minister, to the utmost power of redemptive sacrifice. The attainments of his life, the triumph of his cause, are his only lordship. They are his supreme lordship because he gave himself to them utterly.

The heralding of the Kingdom, his essential messiahship, determined all his ministry. For the sufficient herald has more to do than to announce his message in words. The very spirit of the Kingdom must possess him, must be expressed in him, and this is one with the holy spirit of God. He could not have announced the Kingdom if his life and deeds had not enabled him to say, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me." That spirit of the Kingdom makes its representative holy in its holiness, loving in its love, unto the last demand of heroic devotion, and stern as the conditions of entering the Kingdom are inviolable. It urges him to those ministries which shall constitute the Kingdom's consummations, it impels him to open the blind eyes, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the gospel to the poor, to receive sinners and to eat with them, to pour himself out to the last and least. His unparalleled, but not miraculously incredible influence upon sick bodies and distracted minds, through the faith which his announcement awakened, was derived from the same consciousness that as ambassador he was the representative of the Kingdom's beneficent power. Through all the wild exaggerations of the gospel reports there is manifest in him a calm restraint in his exercise of this influence. He subordinated it to his office of herald of the Kingdom, and made it contributory to his high calling. Therefore it never led him into failure, through attempts to exceed that power's legitimate exercise. He correctly viewed his mighty works as attestations of his message, credentials of his office. And as the Kingdom is God's gift, so these works of his are by God's power. In every way Jesus' announcement of the Kingdom rises into the power of his life to organize it.

Complaints against Jesus that he failed to attack the evil or senescent institutions of his day need not long detain the historic sense. These criticisms take too little account of his terrific indignations, his blastings of those abuses which encountered his high mission. In the reports of his denun-

ciations, the bitterness, unfairness, and scurrility attributed to him by the evangelists, manifest so plainly the temper aroused in his successors by their conflicts with Judaism, and are so unlike his habitual poise in the face of his antagonists, that no unbiased historic criticism can charge them against him. He entered the conflicts necessary to his heart-searching and persuasive announcement of the Kingdom of God. Whatever opposed that proclamation he fought down, though the battle swept on to Calvary. His two chief antagonists were hypocrisy and inhumanity. Hypocrisy was to him the substitution of another spirit for the spirit of the Kingdom. Inhumanity culminated in the laying of a stumbling-block in the way of God's little ones. This was the battle which his heralding encountered. Upon it has depended our age-long strife. Faithful to his orders, he refused to divide his forces for any other.

#### IV

The work left for us, in connecting the two great elements of Jesus' gospel, involves modifications of some of his teachings in the interest of his purpose, to which alone they are subordinate, and by which alone they are amendable. Literal faithfulness to them is spiritual unfaithfulness to his aim. Non-resistance to the evil man, or that waiving of an individual right which compromises the progress of universal human rights, means something different from Jesus' view, to those who must work out the order which he expected to descend soon from God. The accumulation, distribution, and use of wealth may be different from the unsocial covetousness and self-indulgence against which he prophesied, when we take wealth as an instrument for serving his ends. The developing institutions and goods of civilization are different when they become the progressive incarnations of the good most dear to him. In these tasks we develop instruments outside his absorptions, and unnecessary for the work he had to do.

The work which is left to us makes the demands of our discipleship severe and difficult. A man who loses in the things of it Jesus' spirit and purpose is none of his. Then our toils and strifes, however we may attempt to justify them, become subversive of his desire. When the pursuit or retention of these things contradicts his purpose, we must unbind ourselves from them and fling them away. None the less, ineffectiveness in any man's part of the world's work is more severely judged by the standards of the Kingdom than by the world's inconsiderate demands. God's workmen have no time off. Sleep and food, recuperations and replenishments of exhausted powers, play, respites when "I loaf and invite my soul," books and art, joy and love, prayer, meditation, and the cultivation of the spiritual life, all are for the world's work that we have to do, and implicit in it; and the sternest demand of the work, which is the life, is that it shall somehow and every way direct itself and concentrate itself upon Jesus' great purpose of ministry to the last and least. When this is done, the care and fret and exhausting self-regarding ambition, with slavish dependence upon the world's estimates of success, fall away, leaving it all a delight in the spirit and purpose which now occupy even its least details.

Whatever powers we employ for his Kingdom's service, the supreme energies are from his heart. The age to come is the conquest of his sacrifice and ours, as at every morning's renewal of our tasks we take up our cross and follow him. Force beats back evil that a space may be won where his plants of life may grow, from his light, his tears, his bloody sweat. We use resisting, annihilating force to the end that it may become unnecessary. The carnal weapons of our warfare achieve victories by the superior strength of heroic devotion, not because we take the lives of his enemies, but because we give our own. From the compulsions which we enlist for his cause, we keep out, so imperfectly, the opposites of his spirit, which cancel his designs. And we find, in sublime contrasts

to its inefficiencies, how great were his ways of getting things done. So wealth, though it may be his instrument, may suddenly change, even in the hands of best intention, from a rod of power to a serpent that darts at the face of him who holds it. Still the covetousness of its accumulation and the self-indulgence of its use are as evident as when Jesus branded the mammon of unrighteousness. Dives, faring sumptuously every day, is eulogized because some crumbs from his table are fed to Lazarus laid at his gate full of sores. Even wealth's purest philanthropies are infected by the injustices of its accumulation and tenure of proprietorship in an un-Christianized, unhumanized industrial order. Many who have the talent, which they must use, for getting it, and are oppressed by the load of it, struggle in vain against the present barbarous conditions, to find a practicable way to the righteous acquiring and distributing of it. Those who are most blatant to show the way out are blind leaders whom only the blind can conscientiously follow. The intensifying class struggle for wealth makes little progress because it neglects to consider the purpose of wealth. The church, though not competent to work out a science of wealth, is under obligation to proclaim a gospel of its motives and ends, by which its methods may be tested; but she shirks her responsibility. To this inefficiency is due a large part of her futilities. And meanwhile the wealthiest benefactions descend from riches of the soul. So institutions which house the finer accumulations of civilization are transient tabernacles of the humanity regenerated from Jesus' heart. Many which seemed essential have become superfluous. Artificial complexities will work out into natural simplicities at last. Our tasks are like those which we give to a child, when we care little for what is outwardly accomplished, if only the child is developed by them. Yet all the more earnestly do we apply these insufficient devices because we perceive their insufficiency, for our task is not only to use them, but continually to improve the means which we must use, unto



perfectings beyond our sight, changing the earth as it is into the earth that is to be. All the realm bequeathed to us between Jesus' goal and his creation of the new humanity, we fill from his life which continually renews and unites us, and from his purpose which guides us. We are servants bidden to wait and watch for our lord; but his way to us is impassable; therefore we go to meet him, and across the flood that bars his progress, we, with labor and long pain, build the road by which the King of Glory shall come in.

## V

Now that Jesus' hope is found to be fixed upon a perfected earth, the charges against him of otherworldliness and historic pessimism fall to the ground. They were always evidently contrary to his view of nature and his estimate of man. But from the opposite direction objections arise, only to be merged into his hope.

Perfection, it is urged, is unattainable and undesirable. It would turn to evil if attained. A perfected earth, with all its problems solved, all its ambitions accomplished, with nothing to do except the same old things, nothing left to strive for, to amend, would be a lubber-land, a garden of Eden, a blank, an extinction. But it is a deeper thought that perfection is not static, but dynamic, an energy of holy love that fulfils itself and accomplishes evolving tasks always and from more to more. No lower, idler perfection than this is in Jesus' soul, nor is anything unworthy of this in his hope. Hope does not contradict the energies that form it.

But, it is again objected—and these two objections seem to involve whatever may be challenged from this side—this earth, which Jesus made his goal in what he supposed the fulfilment of God's purpose, is as a spark in the flaming universe, gleaming for a moment and then ashes. What are the traversible miles of its circumference, in spaces which light-years cannot measure! What are the computable millenniums of its possible

habitableness, in eons to which the birth, duration, and death of the star-mist beyond Andromeda are an incident! The expectation of Jesus may seem to disappear with the shriveling up of his cosmology. Is the human spirit, in this instance at its most generous ideal, again overwhelmed by superspatial and supertemporal immensity? Yet in some estimates all bigness sinks into insignificance in comparison with the universe of Jesus' soul. Nor would our astronomy have changed his hope and purpose any more than, upon reflection, it need change ours, who know the science of which he was ignorant, and are learning the rudiments of the wisdom which he knew. For the work which anyone must do is the work next his hand. If it is an eternal task, it begins and forever continues with the task at hand. The universe beyond this world is not now our field of labor: it becomes so by our work upon this earth. Every faithful man works in the lot assigned to him, or rather, attainable by him, to make that place better, in Jesus' spirit, towards Jesus' goal. Each faithful man works with every other in the works which unite and advance to redeem the earth in Jesus' spirit and to Jesus' goal. And when we feel ourselves transcendent of these limitations, for God hath set not the world only, but eternity in our heart, we may see our earth task flashing its signals beyond the orbit of Mars. They are responsive signals. God's work of redemption is everywhere in his encircling skies, accomplished by those who in every lot attainable by them work together for his Kingdom in the works appointed them. The perfecting of earth is essential and directive in Jesus' work and ours. It is not final. The service of the last and least everywhere is final. The work and the workers beyond us are one with us in his prayer, "Thy Kingdom come."

## VI

When we ask what detailed contributions Jesus has made to the consciousness and the tasks of our awakening spiritual humanism, the wealth of the answer amazes us. He discovered,

to mention only a part of his discoveries, the child, the woman, the common man, the union of spiritual aims with daily toils, the fundamental answer to the perplexities of human relations. From the God of the social passion down to the place of the sparrow and the grass of the field in the universal order, which is the Father's love, everything that enters man's life or touches it is implicit in Jesus' gospel. Every problem of politics, of industry, of the courses of individual lives, of the unity of lives in the great human brotherhood, depends for the essential of its solution, and therefore for the use and direction of every element in the process of its solution, upon his progressive creation of a new humanity concentrated in the primal devotion to the last and least. The demonstration of this thesis is far beyond the scope of these few reflections. It can be completely established only when the Kingdom of God is come. Yet it is safe to derive our guiding principle, whose proof can be only in its outworking, from the fusion of Jesus' hopes with the works we have to do; especially as that principle has never yet failed to result in deep satisfactions to the man who tests his life's efficiencies by their workings out of character and spirituality, of joy and love, and of the conditions favorable to these things. This effectiveness is the supreme instance of the universal content, the inexhaustibly unfolding applications of simplest principles. Nor is this appreciation lessened by the recognition of the wide realms which Jesus could not enter. The greatness of any thinker is measured by the applicability of his thought to activities which are, by historic necessity, outside his view. The wisdom which meets that test has attained the heart of things. It is a continually evolving and originating power of thought and action in its disciples, and becomes more originaive with each successive generation of them.

In our day, as in other epochs of change, mankind has seemed to have come to the parting of the ways, the parting of Jesus' way from ours. Once more many earnest men, with

tender reverence, with stern devotion to the work at hand, bid him farewell. They and the generations after them, they know, can never forget the gentlest, holiest, manliest presence that ever blessed the earth. Sanctifying memories of him will, they gratefully acknowledge, impart inspiration to tasks which, they judge, are not his tasks, and which must be pursued along ways that are not his way. With aching hearts of loneliness we follow the path which now opens to our advance. And before us again we see the guiding presence of our Master. In his leadership we are united into the new humanity continuously created by him, as he leads us, one in heart and purpose, to the neglected, the oppressed, the last and least of his brethren. To the starving, ruined peoples he leads us, and to the waste places of the earth, many of them at our doors; wherever there is ignorance, wherever there is crime, and the publicans and the harlots rise up and follow him; wherever there is poverty that withholds the largest human privilege; wherever a little child of a backward race has denied to it equal and supreme opportunity of all the accumulated excellencies of mankind. It is into a regenerated civilization that we follow him. It were better for a civilization that a millstone were hanged about its neck and that it were drowned in the depth of the sea, than that it should lay a stumbling-block before one of these little ones. Through this earth and beyond it, we his brotherhood, sweeping into our front ranks those who were the neglected and oppressed, follow him, to the spirits in prison, to the innumerable dead of unilluminated ages, wherever in his unending path there are blind eyes to be opened, dead souls to rise again, hate to be won to love, lower forms of existence to be led up into his universal human, forms of spiritual life unimaginable to us, to be united in the fellowship of his inexhaustible helpfulness; there is his leading, there is our following, into fulfilments everywhere of the love for which he died.